

Dear FCC Commissioners,

Thank you for arranging this debate, so essential to our democracy, as keeping a free press is essential for a democracy to work. Jefferson and our other founding fathers understood this fact; that is why a free press is one of several First Amendment rights, and why we must all strive, as citizens and as public servants, to keep the press free.

These points I of course assume you already know and understand. However, what you may not know is that, after the Constitution had been written and ratified, and after he had left the Presidency, Jefferson expressed deep concern about the impact of "moneyed corporations" on our democracy.

It had only taken a single generation for the specter of despotic power of "moneyed corporations" - the central target of our revolt and Declaration of Independence in the first place - to re-emerge and evoke this great leader's concern.

I fear Mr. Jefferson would spin in his grave to see the status of our press today. The majority of all media - newspapers, radio, TV, magazines, film - owned by only six powerful corporations, and 80 percent owned by large companies. In 1946, that same proportion was owned by individuals and small companies. In other words, the press was in the hands of the people, the citizens of this country. Now the media outlets have exploded in number, and their control has shrunk to the hands of a powerful few.

This can not and does not constitute a free press, and thus can not and does not serve our democracy. A free press means that the press is in the hands of the people, the citizenry, both for production and for consumption. A free press can NOT be accomplished by large corporations whose sole interest is to satisfy stockholders with the greatest profits. Nor can it be accomplished by large corporations owning locally served markets, nor by large corporations holding ownership across the various media. Only corporate owners and stockholders are served in these instances, NOT the people. The FCC was established to PROTECT our First Amendment right to a free press by REGULATING its use and abuses.

I therefore implore you to:

1. Regulate ownership of broadcast media and newspapers such that no single corporation or company or person is allowed to own both, anywhere locally or nationally, for operation in this country.
2. Restrict ownership of local radio stations to local/regional residents.
3. Regulate ownership of television and radio such that no single corporation or company or person is allowed to own both, anywhere locally or nationally, for operation in this country.
4. Restrict ownership of local TV stations to local/regional residents.
5. Regulate ownership of national networks such that no single corporation or company or person is allowed to own more than one, anywhere locally or nationally, for operation in this country.
6. Restrict ownership of national networks to American citizens and residents.

As a fellow citizen deeply invested in preserving democracy, I feel strongly that these regulations and restrictions imposed on media ownership are essential to preserving a free press, and thus a democracy, in this country. I trust that you, as Commissioners and public servants, will respond according to these democratic principles.

Sincerely,

William J. Santoro